



## HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

3430 Courthouse Drive ■ Ellicott City, Maryland 21043 ■ 410-313-2013 Voice/Relay

Calvin Ball  
Howard County Executive  
cball@howardcountymd.gov

www.howardcountymd.gov  
FAX 410-313-3051

March 1, 2026

The Honorable Jheanelle K. Wilkins, Chair  
Ways and Means Committee  
Taylor House Office Building, Room 131  
6 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT of House Bill 1580: Economic Development - Maryland Enhanced Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts**

Dear Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, and Members of the Committee:

House Bill 1580 authorizes the Maryland Economic Development Corporation (MEDCO) to issue bonds for the development of a Maryland enhanced TIF district, defined as a development district with a project costing more than \$500 million that includes a convention center or is located within one half mile of a transit station, and for which local authorities have approved Tax Increment Financing. The bill further authorizes the Board of Public Works, upon recommendation from MEDCO, to pledge certain State revenues, including a portion of incremental sales and income taxes generated within these enhanced TIF districts, to support these projects.

This legislation provides an important financing tool to facilitate large-scale, transformational economic development projects.

Today, counties designate TIF districts and issue bonds to finance development, with incremental real property tax revenues used to service that debt. However, as infrastructure costs continue to rise, jurisdictions increasingly face funding gaps. HB 1580 responds to this challenge by expanding flexibility and allowing additional revenue sources, including State income and sales taxes, to support TIF bonds where appropriate.

Howard County's Downtown Columbia TIF District illustrates why this flexibility is critical, particularly for transit-oriented development at scale. Guided by a 30-year master plan, Downtown Columbia is transforming a former suburban commercial center into a dense, walkable, mixed use urban core anchored by transit connectivity.

The district is within walking distance of an established transit center that currently serves eight Regional Transportation Agency routes, with six additional commuter and express routes operated nearby by the Maryland Transit Administration. Transit access is foundational to the success of this redevelopment and central to its long term growth strategy.

Downtown Columbia includes more than 2.3 million square feet of office space and 1.6 million square feet of retail and anchors major employers such as Tenable, CareFirst, and TEDCO. The Merriweather District and Lakefront areas continue to experience active construction and significant private investment.



## HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

3430 Courthouse Drive ■ Ellicott City, Maryland 21043 ■ 410-313-2013 Voice/Relay

Calvin Ball  
Howard County Executive  
cball@howardcountymd.gov

www.howardcountymd.gov  
FAX 410-313-3051

Recognizing future growth, Howard County has conducted a Location and Site Analysis Study to expand and reconfigure the existing Downtown Columbia Transit Center into a larger, modernized central hub for county and regional transit services. Expansion of the transit center is a priority because continued density and economic activity depend on high quality, scalable transit infrastructure.

While current revenues support existing debt service, large scale redevelopment unfolds over decades and across economic cycles. Transit expansion requires significant upfront capital investment before full buildout occurs. HB 1580 would provide additional tools to help finance these types of transit-oriented, infrastructure intensive projects by allowing broader revenue support where appropriate.

Looking ahead, Howard County has also recently designated an Enterprise Zone within our Gateway Innovation District. Adopted in 2025, this district is guided by a transformational plan that will require coordinated investment at scale. The Gateway Master Plan anticipates market demand for up to 8,400 new housing units, 8,100 new jobs, 1.8 million square feet of commercial and innovation/flex office space, and approximately 312,000 square feet of retail and restaurants. While financing structures are still being developed, having a full toolbox available will be critical. Limiting repayment strictly to district revenues reduces flexibility precisely when adaptability is most needed.

HB 1580 would provide counties with additional options to support TIF related debt for projects that meet a high threshold of scale and transit development.

Modern economic development is about building complete communities anchored by transit, housing, employment, and civic infrastructure that can endure economic cycles and adapt to changing market conditions. HB 1580 strengthens Maryland's ability to support transit centered, long horizon investments.

For these reasons, Howard County respectfully urges a **favorable report on House Bill 1580**.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Calvin Ball  
Howard County Executive